

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

C1308

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE (Of which some notice has been given)

Thursday, 23 October 2014

Hon Lynn MacLaren to the Minister for Child Protection.

1. Is the Minister aware that from 2012-13, homelessness services in WA were working at full capacity and were unable to meet 17,000 requests for assistance?
2. What is the State Government doing to increase homelessness services and drive down this number?
3. What other essential support services related to homelessness did not meet demand in Western Australia from 2012-13?
4. Will the State Government provide increased funding to meet these demands across these services?
5. If yes, please outline this funding and,
6. If no, why not?

I thank the Hon. Member for some notice of this question.

1. Yes, I am aware of the data on the unassisted requests for services from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Specialist Homelessness Services 2012-13 report. The data reports instances where a request for services resulted in a person receiving no immediate services.

There may be a number of reasons why an agency cannot meet a particular request, for example, a person may need a service that is not offered by a particular agency, or in other cases agencies may be operating at capacity.

Of the clients who accessed Western Australian SHS in 2012-13:

- 12,547 needed accommodation, of these 9,218 were provided with accommodation, 1,468 were referred to other services for accommodation.

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- 5,230 needed assistance to sustain housing tenure, of these 4,553 were provided assistance, 175 were referred to other services for this assistance.
- 20,668 needed general services, of these 20,558 were provided with this assistance, 64 were referred to other services for assistance.
- 5,221 needed other specialist services, of these 3,651 were provided, 1,128 were referred to other services for assistance.
- 2,625 needed family assistance, of these 1,842 were provided with this assistance, 467 were referred to other services for assistance.
- 2,337 needed immigration/cultural services, of these 2,037 were provided, 185 were referred to other services for assistance.
- 2,295 needed legal/financial services, of these 1,183 were provided this assistance, 755 were referred to other services for this assistance.
- 1,894 needed mental health services, of these 1,017 were provided this assistance, 398 were referred to other services for this assistance.
- 1,181 needed drug and alcohol counselling, of these 665 were provided with these services, 235 were referred to other services for this assistance.
- 214 needed disability services, of these 107 were provided with this service, 50 were referred to other services for assistance.

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) has been extremely successful. An evaluation of Western Australian programs final report (March 2013) and an audit conducted by the Western Australian Office of the Auditor General tabled in the State Government in October 2012, both indicated that Western Australian NPAH programs have been successfully implemented with positive outcomes for clients. Between January 2010 to June 2012, 5,094 clients were assisted, exceeding the 4,978 program target. In addition, there were at least 5,611 children assisted, bringing the total to 10,705 clients. The 11 per cent target for Aboriginal clients accessing the programs was greatly exceeded with 29 per cent of clients identified as Aboriginal.

2. In 2013-14, the State Government provided a significant investment in effective and new homelessness accommodation services and initiatives including:
 - Entrypoint Perth – a new homelessness assessment and referral service which aims to streamline responses for people who are homeless by improving their access to accommodation and support services.
 - Oxford Foyer – officially opened in March 2014 and provides accommodation for a total of 98 young people between the ages of 16 and 25 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. A number of beds are available for young parents and 20 per cent of places are for young people who are leaving the child protection system.
 - Beacon – A new inner city service for single adult men, built on the site Lentarra Hostel which increased capacity by 25 to 102 beds.
 - Interim Night Shelter, Tom Fisher House – a new service providing accommodation to up to eight chronically homeless men over the age of 18 years. A contract for the development of the new purpose built premises has been awarded and the new 10 room premise is due to open in 2015.
 - Geographe House – a new service providing accommodation and support to women and children experiencing family and domestic violence.



- Construction of Derby Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation Service. This service was built and officially opened on 4 October 2014 providing short stay accommodation for Aboriginal people visiting Derby from surrounding communities. A similar model has been operating in Kalgoorlie since 2012.
3. Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) provide a range of services to people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness. These services can include accommodation or assistance with obtaining or maintaining housing, general support services (such as advice/information, meals, laundry/shower facilities, assistance with transport, material aid, brokerage) and more specialist services (including specialised counselling, support for health and mental health, legal services and financial advice and counselling). A client assisted by a SHS can have a range of needs identified and provided by the SHS. Many of these services did not meet demand for 2012-13.
 4. As noted above the State Government has been responsible for a significant increase in the number of beds and specialist homelessness services in Perth and regional areas in 2013 and 2014 to meet the growing demand.

The Department for Child Protection and Family Support has lead agency responsibility for homelessness in Western Australia (WA). Through the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) funding is allocated to support the delivery of specialist homelessness services across WA.

The State Government remains committed to partnering with the Commonwealth Government to address homelessness through the development of long term National Agreements for the continued provision of specialist homelessness services for Western Australians.

5. In 2014-15, approximately \$75 million will be provided through the NAHA and NPAH and State Government funding, for accommodation and support services provided by the not-for-profit community service sector. This includes \$5.9 million allocated in the 2014-15 State Budget to continue the additional funding for NAHA and NPAH services, as well as the continuation of existing State Government funded (under NPAH) Domestic Violence Outreach and Mobile Clinical Outreach Teams.
6. Not applicable.

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